

[Cora Sigmon]

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Cora Sigmon (Farm Wife)

Newton, N.C.

Ethel Deal, Writer

Dudley W. Crawford, Reviser Original Names Changed Names

Cora Sigmon Carrie Sain

Herbert Sigmon Bob Sain C9- 1/22/41- N.C.

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Inside the little store, whose crude signs on the windows announced, "Groceries, Meats and Produce," Carrie Sain looked up from her knitting, pushed a bag of peanuts from the other end of the orange crate on which she was sitting and asked me to have a seat.

"Yes, Bob Sain expects me to keep house and stay in the store too. It's a good thing I was raised on a farm, in a family of fifteen children, and learned how to work. I did manage to finish high school and go one year to college; I wanted to be a teacher. I taught nine years before marriage and six since.

"Bob bought a farm before we were married and I taught to help pay for it. He is one of the best farmers in the country, but the trouble with him was he drunk enough since we been married to buy three or four farms. What he didn't drink up he wasted and run through with. My children are all out on their own now, but his drinking made it hard on them when they

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were growing up. It's a wonder they ever amounted to anything. I've known him to be on a drunk for four months.

"About four years ago he got so bad I sent him to the State Hospital for the Criminal Insane, but he stayed only four weeks. The doctors told him if he drank any more it would kill him. He craved the stuff so he suffered terribly, and took it out on us. He ran all the children away from home. After holding out eight months he started again. He gets on a drunk once in a while now and it nearly kills him.

"The girls come back after a while and managed to finish high school, but the boy has never returned. He and all three of the girls now have good jobs.

"Bob's health is so bad now he can't do much work on the farm, so I have to look after it. We opened this business here a few years ago. He makes trips to the mountains and buys produce and cattle, while I look after the store and the farm. We keep a man hired on the farm and with my management we raise a lot of truck we can sell here in the store. I handle milk, butter and cheese from eight cows and show a nice profit. Bob has a wood saw, buys his wood in large quantities and sells it by the load when it's sawed. That shows a profit too.

"Back when Bob was drinking so much [things?] on the farm run down something awful. He wouldn't spend a cent on the inside nor out. I thought we had reached the bottom when the house caught fire and burned down. We lived in the well house and grainary for two years before we could build again. The girls now are doing things. I have a nice seven room house. Its It's painted indide and out. The girls have bought 3 new rugs and furniture. The lawn is no longer a place to turn the cows. For the first time in my life I'm not ashamed to have company. Bob is still mean and takes out his drinking on me. I stay in the store and when business is d dull I knit and read. We belong to the Lutheran Church. I don't have time to visit my neighbors, and going to a show or a ball game is out of the question.

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I can't leave the business long enough to enjoy myself. Good times wasn't made for me. I've worked so long and played so little I've got of the habit.

"I feel old. My skin goes uncared for. I never have time to have my hair done; Bob would think it was a waste of money if I did. I get up every morning and milk eight cows, while my youngest girl cooks breakfast. The milk must be strained and put away, and churning done. I'm usually at the store at nine o'clock. I've got no time to sew and do things to my clothes. I hire my laundry so to have more time to help Bob. I used to read a lot at night, now I'm so tired, I just go to bed. We are making good here at the store. It is not a question of anything I need. To make life liveable and happy you must have a few things that's not necessities. A woman must go well groomed to feel at her best. Money is alright, but it is not everything. I wear last year's hats and say nothing about it. I do twice the work my husband does and don't complain. I'm in a rut and know it. If I try to get out 4 Bob would have a fit. I know it is up to me to do it if I wait for his consent it won't be done.

"We both vote the Republican ticket. I go to church when I'm not too tired. I helped to get out the sweet potatoes; we made a hundred bushel. I do all my canning, at least two hundred jars during the summer. Besides my milk and butter I have calls for cheese, this I make myself and sell for twenty cents a pound. Bob can afford to hire sufficient help in the store, and on the farm too, but he just won't do it. That would release me and I'd have time to keep house, and do the things a woman loves. He's so ill from craving the whiskey nobody else can get along with him but a few weeks at a time. He knows that I will always be at his beck [,?] and call and do what he says. My one consolation is I know that my children will have the pleasure I've been denied.

As for food and the right kind I guess we have more prepared at my house than necessary. That man of mine will kill himself eating. We raise potatoes of both kinds, corn, wheat and all the vegetables that grow. My hogs gets gallons of good milk to fatten them. I cook and prepare enough meats to run a boarding house. Bob must have the best of everything, not only the best but large quantities."

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Carrie's work worn hands flew back and forth with the needles. Her nails were broken and ugly. The lines in her face told of hard work and sleepless nights. Her dark hair streaked with grey and cut in a boyish bob was oily and unkept. The dark grey flannel dress was made with no attempt as to fit or style and seemed ready to burst under the pressure of her hundred and eighty pounds of flesh. Numerous runs in her cheap rayon stockings accentuated the thickness of her legs and the size of her feet.

A big man of sullen countenance appeared in the doorway, ignored Carrie's visitor, and said to her, "I want you to go home and see if that nigger is getting that plowing done. You take the car, I may need the truck." Carrie rolled up her knitting and got up. "While you are out there look about that sow and the pigs, and I'm afraid that heifer has jumped out of the pasture. I'll look after things here while you are gone." As the car left the curb Bob called, "hurry back, I'll be needing you here. "